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**NOAA Fisheries Determines the Southern Population of Bocaccio
Does Not Warrant Listing Under the Endangered Species Act**

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) announced today that the southern population of bocaccio (*Sebastes paucispinis*), a rockfish located in the waters south of Cape Mendocino off the coast of California, does not warrant listing as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is an agency of the Department of Commerce.

"Scientific data show the southern population of bocaccio to be at low levels, but the population does not warrant listing under the ESA," said Bill Hogarth, director of NOAA Fisheries. "Instead, we will closely monitor the status of bocaccio by continuing research activities and by working with the Pacific Fishery Management Council to monitor the progress of their rebuilding measures."

Bocaccio is considered overfished under the nation's marine fisheries law, the Magnuson-Stevens Act. In January 2001, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Center for Biological Diversity, and the Ocean Conservancy petitioned NOAA Fisheries to list the population of bocaccio south of Cape Mendocino as threatened, and to designate critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

In June 2001, NOAA Fisheries found that the petition contained substantial information to warrant further examination. Information and comments were solicited from the public, and the NOAA Fisheries Southwest Fisheries Science Center in La Jolla, Calif., reviewed the status of the species.

The status review provided a summary of the biology, current population status, and future outlook for the southern population of bocaccio, including results of a population model that projects population levels at 25 and 100 years under varying harvest rates. In addition, the status review includes an evaluation of several risk factors that are critical for determining whether the listing of bocaccio was warranted under the ESA. Copies of the status review and the Federal Register notice will be available online at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>.

Based on a review of the best scientific and commercial information on the status of the species, and on management recommendations recently submitted by the Council to further protect bocaccio, NOAA Fisheries finds that listing the southern stock of bocaccio is not warranted at this time. However, bocaccio will be retained on the candidate species list, and its status will be closely monitored. NOAA Fisheries is preparing additional management measures for 2003, recommended by the Pacific Fishery Management Council, that will further reduce incidental and directed catches.

Bocaccio are known to exist as far north as Alaska and as far south as central Baja, California. Bocaccio is a common rockfish, belonging to the genus *Sebastes*. Adults have been found at depths of 40 to 1,578 feet, but are most abundant at 165 to 825 feet. Adults are often found in association with rocky areas. Larvae and small juveniles are free swimming and are commonly found in the upper 300 feet of the water column.

NOAA Fisheries is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources through scientific research, management, enforcement, and the conservation of marine mammals and other protected marine species and their habitat. To learn more about NOAA Fisheries, please visit <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>.